His Mother's Son . . . . . No Mama's Boy

Pencil is Weapon Of Alamein Hero

By WILLIAM D. PATTERSON

THE SIMPLE, hard-driving, straightforward qualities Field Marshal Montgomery displayed on the field of battle in the Second World War are also just as evident in his frank and uncompromising autobiography as man and soldier.

His Memoirs (World) provide an absolutely absorbing account of his life and his controversies, for he was as quick to argue with his superiors as he was to engage the enemy. And he usually routed both.

It is a remarkable tale he has to tell. His 50 years of continuous service are the longest in the history of the British army, during which he served in two world wars.

After a rather unpropitious start, when he nearly flunked out of school and the military college, he determined to make the army his career and to master the profession of war. This he did, for which Britain and the free world will always be grateful.

A measure of Montgomery's reputation for blunt honesty, unsparing in blame and unstinting in praise, is revealed in his autobiography at the outset. He writes freely of his dislike for his harsh, parsimonious, domineering, nagging and disciplinarian mother. On the other hand he revered his father, a generous, benign high churchman.

His life-long relation with his mother was one of constant conflict and clash of strong wills, a training in character which undoubtedly stood him in good stead when he took over a faltering command in the African desert and began to crack the whip over the Eighth Army in pursuit of Rommel. He was the son of the harsh mother, not the benevolent father, accepting no excuses from officers or men in the cruel struggle with the Panzer divisions and the Nazi's crack Afrika Korps.

After the great victories of Alamein and Tripoli in North Africa drove the Axis back toward the Continent, "Monty" returned to London to join in the cross-channel invasion of Europe by the vast Allied force mounted under Eisenhower.

There were many controversies with Eisenhower over tactics and strategy. The principal one was Montgomery's desire to command the entire front in France after the invasion and to concentrate the Allied forces in one main effort to break through the German lines and bring down Germany. Eisenhower's decision to concentrate command under himself and fight on a broad front are criticized with great persuasiveness by Montgomery.

And Montgomery is just as quick to criticize British commanders as Americans. He has hard words for Field Marshals Gort, Ironside and Auchinleck, and for all politicians except Churchill and Attlee. He has a rather dim view of American Generals Patton and Bradley,

Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery . . . the army nearly lost him

but commends Simpson, Hodges and Gerow. He does not regard Eisenhower as a great soldier, but finds him outstanding as a military statesman and human being.

In his years after the end of the Second World War as chief of Britain's Imperial General Staff and as Deputy Commander of NATO, Montgomery has much that is frank and useful to say about the strengths and weaknesses of present armed forces in Europe.

In brief this is both a remarkable human document and a military memoir in the great tradition, a basic source for future historians which readers today can enjoy as a lively part of the record of their own times.

Bernard Law Montgomery was born in London, Nov. 17, 1887, the son of a minister's family in very modest circumstances.

A fierce football player, he was an indifferent scholar in his school years and later at Sandhurst, until it appeared he might not receive a commission. Then he settled down to study and the rest is history.

He withdrew from active service in the army last September after 50 years of unbroken duty with the rank and title of Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, Knight of the Garter.

He wrote his memoirs by himself in longhand, entirely in pencil.

In retirement he now lives at a lovely country estate, Islington Mill, where he follows his interests in farming and gardening. He is 71 years old, still vigorous, still outspoken as ever.

Books and Authors

INSIDE RUSSIA

Young Writer Opens Window

THE GOOD-LOOKING GIRL who smiles at us from the jacket of the book is Sally Belfrage, born in Hollywood of British parents who were deported back to England some years ago for leftist activity. From this painful experience she seems to have drawn the useful lesson that intolerance should not be tolerated. Her book, "A Room In Moscow," records her experiences in Moscow during five months she spent there working as an English translator.

From her background the reader might suppose that Miss Belfrage had written a strongly pro-communist book. Not at all. On the contrary, she tried hard to be objective in recording her impressions of Russians she met going about their daily business. Her observations are keen, her deductions logical and for the most part acceptable, giving the reader on the whole a vivid and revealing picture of Russian life at the man-in-the-street level.

She visited Russia as a delegate to a Communist Youth Festival, a hectic experience indeed. (The American delegates impressed her very poorly, judging by what she says about them.) From Moscow on to China for a similar festival there. Miss Belfrage devotes only a few pages to China, but they are full of bite. From her train window much of the Chinese landscape "looked like an H. W. Wells futuristic wasteland—absolute flatness and nothingness." The adulation heaped on Mao Tse-tung, she found, was "incredible." This was the same kind of thing the Russians once did to Stalin and now condemn as "cult of personality."

Her daily contacts with the Russian people in Moscow convinced her of their general friendliness to Westerners.

"Most of them," she records, "don't feel particularly crushed because they live under a dictatorship, nor particularly liberated because they live under socialism." (Here she reminds us that only elderly Russians remember any other way of life at all.) "The average man is aloof from the world-shaking events around him, and he would really rather not think about them, and certainly wouldn't consider interfering with them."

As an intelligent young girl, Miss Belfrage pins her hopes on the young generations of Americans, Britons, Chinese and Russians, to whom the future belongs—that a generation from now Americans, Britons and Chinese will be living together in peace and amity. J.B.

THE STAMP PACKET

By R. M. ANGUS

INFORMATION, PLEASE

A LETTER to this column asks information as to a reliable guide to philately. The most concise book of information is a small red one called "Stamp Collecting" by A. B. Creeke Jr. which is one of the series of "hobby books." Starting from the birth of the stamp and the paper it is printed on, it is completely informative throughout its 317 pages and is well illustrated. Written in simple language with a glossary of philatelic terms, it is suitable for the merest tyro or the advanced specialist.

Another inquirer asks "What is a grille?" This is a series of small indentations on each stamp, either in the form of a square or oblong occupying about one-quarter of the area of the stamp, but varying in size to such an extent that it can rarely be found covering the entire stamp It was introduced on some of the early issues of the United States of America as a precaution against cleaning of stamps for re-use of forgery. While easily seen on mint copies, it is sometimes very hard to detect on stamps which have been soaked off paper and as each measurement has a different catalogue value, it is often difficult to determine how many millimeters it measures each way. Collectors are rather prone to see grilles where none exists with a view to increasing the value of a stamp. Grilles may also be found on the early stamps of Peru.

British Information Services announce that the Northern Region of Nigeria will issue two stamps to celebrate the achievement of self-government. The 1 shilling green and black value bears a portrait of Queen Elizabeth and the Kano Mosque, and the 3 penny purple and black value a portrait of the Queen and Lugard Hall, seat of the legislature. Both have the inscription, "Self Government Northern Region, 15th March, 1959."

On March 2 New Zealand will issue a set of three stamps to mark the centennial of the province of Marlborough. The values, colors and designs are: 2 penny green, the careening of HMS Endeavour at Ship Cove; 3 penny blue, shipping of wool at Wairau bar in 1857; 8 penny brown, the salt industry at Grassmere The designs are by G. R. Bull and G. Smith of Wellington and printing by Harrison and Sons Ltd. in photogravure. They will be withdrawn from sale at the end of May, 1959.

A 3 penny stamp with a surcharge of 1 penny will be issued in June, the surcharge for the benefit of the Red Cross. The issuing of this stamp will coincide with the centennial of the Battle of Solferino at which the idea of a Red Cross organization originated.

A 2-cent grey and white stamp with red border and showing a victorious rebel soldier waving his arm before the Cuban flag, commemorates the triumph of the rebellion led by Fidel Castro. The translation reads "January 1, 1959, Day of Liberation."